



MSDE Education Bulletin, February 27, 2015

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NEW PARCC TESTS SET TO BEGIN

Thousands of Maryland students next week will begin using the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) tests, as the testing window for the Performance Based Assessment opens on March 2.



Students at Arundel Middle School take a PARCC practice test earlier this month.

The new PARCC tests, aligned to Maryland's College and Career Ready Standards adopted in 2010, cover Reading/English Language Arts and Mathematics in grades three through eight, plus Algebra and English 10 at the high school level.

"Our aim is not to teach students what to think, but how to think," said State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery. "We're setting the bar high for all Maryland students, and they deserve it."

Maryland schools have been preparing for the new assessments for more than a year. In 2014, virtually all Maryland schools piloted the new exams, while other students still took the old

Maryland School Assessment (MSA) tests. This is the first full year of PARCC implementation, with nearly 75 percent of schools opting to take the online version of the new assessments.

The new standards increase rigor and complexity, building for students a foundation for success in the rapidly changing 21st century economy.

The PARCC assessments were built to measure a full continuum of student abilities, including the performance of high- and low-performing students. The new assessments will test writing skills at every grade level, as well as critical thinking and problem solving skills in an in-depth manner.

As computer-based assessments, PARCC will allow for timely snapshots of student knowledge that provide parents and students with richer information about performance, and give educators the opportunity to adjust instruction to better support learning.

More information on PARCC is available [here](#).

EDUCATORS SAY PROGRESS MADE WITH SLO PROCESS

Maryland teachers and principals find a major component of the new Statewide educator evaluation system to be a manageable process that provides support to teachers and principals.

Maryland's Educator Evaluation System gauges student growth through Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and other evidence of student growth available in each local school system. A new survey has found that the SLO process is improving for both teachers and principals.

SLOs are measurable instructional goals established for a specific group of students over a set period of time. MSDE staff surveyed educators this winter to learn how the SLO system was performing. With nearly 10,000 responses, the results are positive:

- Two-thirds of survey respondents said they understand what a quality SLO looks like.
- Nearly 70 percent (68.8 percent) of respondents said they are receiving help to make the SLO process more manageable.
- Almost three in four respondents (74.6 percent) said they knew where to go for help with the SLO process.
- More than 60 percent of respondents indicated that the SLO process led to "meaningful conversations" about improving instruction.

The survey builds upon other positive data about Maryland's Educator Evaluation System.

Maryland last fall released the first full report on teacher evaluations, completed in the 2013-14 school year, which found that 97.2 percent of teachers were rated either "highly effective" or "effective" in the State's three-tiered rating system. Likewise, 97.5 percent of principals were rated either "effective" or "highly effective."

The data found that 40.8 percent of teachers were rated "highly effective," the top tier of the three-part rating system. Likewise, 48.3 percent of principals were rated "highly effective," under

the evaluation system.

School systems are currently in the second year of implementing new evaluation systems, and MSDE will continue to monitor progress in that implementation. State assessment data will become available for consideration as part of the student growth calculation in 2016-17.

A few words from State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery



State Superintendent of Schools
Lillian M. Lowery

The Maryland State Board of Education this week congratulated Anne Arundel's Belle Grove Elementary, recently named a National Title I Distinguished School for the 2014-2015 school year.

The honor is absolutely warranted. Belle Grove is committed to promoting a positive learning environment for all students, and its success speaks volumes. The school has strengthened student achievement through data analysis, improved professional development, and increased community involvement. Belle Grove serves 265 students in grades PreK to 5. Eighty-seven percent of the diverse student body is eligible for free- or reduced-price meals.

The school, located in the Old Brooklyn Park community, was honored by the National Association of State Title I Directors at the National Title I Conference in Salt Lake City earlier this month.

* * *

Three Maryland schools this month received Excellence in Gifted and Talented Education (EGATE) awards, which recognize top elementary, middle, and high school programs. These three schools deserve our congratulations.

The schools are Cross Country Elementary and Roland Park Elementary in Baltimore City, along with Greenbelt Elementary School in Prince George's County.

The awards program, currently in its fifth year, celebrates gifted and talented programs aligned with the Maryland criteria. Thirty-three schools from 10 different systems have been honored over the life of the program, and each represents a top-performing school.

* * *

MSDE this month became the first State in the nation to sponsor an "Edcamp," a professional learning event at which educators designed the agenda to suit their particular needs. It was exciting to be surrounded by all that creativity and energy.

Developers of the Edcamp program described it as an "unconference," which reverse-engineers the typical education gathering. Unlike traditional conferences, with schedules dictated months in

advance, EdcampMD's agenda was developed as a group activity at the outset of the day. Instead of a presenter standing in front of the room lecturing participants, attendees participated in discussions and hands-on learning sessions.

Educators learning from each other: what could be a better scenario?

Video Highlights

Lowery, Duncan - Parents Town Hall

February 4, 2015

Maryland Schools Superintendent Lillian Lowery welcomes U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan to Annapolis. The visit to Bates Middle School is billed as a Parent Town Hall. Here are the highlights from the visit February 4, 2015

[Windows Media Version](#)

[QuickTime Version](#) _

[MP4 Version](#)

Board News

January 27, 2015

Board News January features Maryland's ever improving graduation rate, and a discussion on how to make it even better. Also, the state formulates plans to apply for an extension of the ESEA waiver, and make adjustments for snow days.

[Windows Media Version](#)

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Frederick County Teacher Wins \$25,000 Milken Award

January 28, 2015

The Milken Family Foundation surprises Frederick County Teacher Margaret Hawk with a \$25,000 check -- and a 2014-15 Milken National Educator Award. See the surprise announcement as it happens at Yellow Springs Elementary.

[Windows Media Version](#)

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MSDE Video Highlights

Calendar

March 2 - PARCC Performance Based Assessment Testing Window Opens

March 9 - Blue Ribbon Schools Dinner, Annapolis

March 24 - Maryland State Board of Education meeting, Baltimore

In the News

[Maryland's Teacher-Principal Evaluations Reviewed](#)

WBAL-TV

[Maryland Students, Educators Get Ready for New Test](#)

Associated Press

[Widespread Misconceptions about the Common Core](#)

Washington Post

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